

WILLIAM NEWELL, )  
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 Plaintiff, )  
 )  
 v. ) No. 4:12CV00122 ERW  
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 ANGIE HENDERSON, et al., )  
 )  
 Defendants. )

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of plaintiff (registration no. 280922), an inmate at Tipton Correctional Center, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$11.57. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, based upon a review of the complaint, the Court finds that the complaint should be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the

greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. Id.

Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his complaint. A review of plaintiff's account indicates an average monthly deposit of \$57.83, and an average monthly balance of \$17.46. Plaintiff has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$11.57, which is 20 percent of plaintiff's average monthly deposit.

#### **28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact." Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action is malicious if it is

undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff'd 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987).

To determine whether an action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, the Court must engage in a two-step inquiry. First, the Court must identify the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth. Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1950-51 (2009). These include “legal conclusions” and “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action [that are] supported by mere conclusory statements.” Id. at 1949. Second, the Court must determine whether the complaint states a plausible claim for relief. Id. at 1950-51. This is a “context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” Id. at 1950. The plaintiff is required to plead facts that show more than the “mere possibility of misconduct.” Id. The Court must review the factual allegations in the complaint “to determine if they plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief.” Id. at 1951. When faced with alternative explanations for the alleged misconduct, the Court may exercise its judgment in determining whether plaintiff’s conclusion is the most plausible or whether it is more likely that no misconduct occurred. Id. at 1950, 51-52.

## **The Complaint**

Plaintiff, an inmate at Tipton Correctional Center, brings this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging violations of his civil rights. Named as defendants are Angie Henderson (nurse) and Unknown Williams (doctor), both presumably employees of Correctional Medical Services (“CMS”).

Plaintiff alleges that he underwent surgery to have his tonsils removed in April of 2011. He claims that after the surgery he was taken back to the prison infirmary at Missouri Eastern Correctional Center and kept there for three days but was not given adequate pain medication. Plaintiff claims that three days after the surgery he was placed back in his regular housing unit. Plaintiff complains that several weeks later he got a bloody nose that required ice packs to stop the bleeding. Plaintiff states that during her treatment of the bloody nose defendant Henderson remarked that his case was not considered a medical emergency. Plaintiff claims that he later passed out from the nosebleed and was taken to a local hospital.

Although plaintiff lists Angie Henderson as a defendant in this action, he has not made any allegations against nurse Henderson other than the statement attributed to her above which fails to denote liability. Moreover, plaintiff’s complaint is completely devoid of any allegations against defendant Williams. Despite the lack of specific allegations against any of the named defendants, from the overall tone of plaintiff’s

complaint, it appears that plaintiff believes the medical treatment he received after his tonsillectomy was insufficient.

### **Discussion**

“Liability under § 1983 requires a causal link to, and direct responsibility for, the alleged deprivation of rights.” Madewell v. Roberts, 909 F.2d 1203, 1208 (8th Cir. 1990); see also Martin v. Sargent, 780 F.2d 1334, 1338 (8th Cir. 1985) (claim not cognizable under § 1983 where plaintiff fails to allege defendant was personally involved in or directly responsible for incidents that injured plaintiff); Boyd v. Knox, 47 F.3d 966, 968 (8th Cir. 1995) (respondeat superior theory inapplicable in § 1983 suits). In the instant action, plaintiff has not set forth any facts indicating that any of the named defendants were directly involved in or personally responsible for the alleged violations of his rights. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. See also, Keeper v. King, 130 F.3d 1309, 1314 (8th Cir. 1997) (noting that general responsibility for supervising operations of prison is insufficient to establish personal involvement required to support liability under § 1983); Woods v. Goord, 1998 WL 740782, at \*6 (S.D.N.Y. October 23, 1998) (receiving letters or complaints does not render prison officials personally liable under § 1983).

Moreover, even if plaintiff had made specific allegations of constitutional liability against the named defendants, his claims would still be subject to dismissal. The complaint is silent as to whether defendants are being sued in their official or individual capacities. Where a “complaint is silent about the capacity in which [plaintiff] is suing defendant, [a district court must] interpret the complaint as including only official-capacity claims.” Egerdahl v. Hibbing Community College, 72 F.3d 615, 619 (8th Cir.1995); Nix v. Norman, 879 F.2d 429, 431 (8th Cir. 1989). Naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official, in this case, CMS. In Sanders v. Sears Roebuck and Company, 984 F.2d 972 (8th Cir.1993), the court held that a corporation acting under color of state law will be held liable under section 1983 only for its own unconstitutional policies or actions. “The proper test is whether there is a policy, custom or action by those who represent official policy that inflicts injury actionable under § 1983.” Id., 984 F.2d at 976. Thus, to state a viable claim against CMS for an injury caused by an unconstitutional policy, plaintiff must allege facts indicating that defendants acted pursuant to an official CMS policy and the official policy is responsible for plaintiff being denied constitutionally adequate medical care. Plaintiff has not alleged a policy by CMS that caused his injuries. As such, his claims are subject to pre-service dismissal.

Accordingly,

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED**.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$11.57 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to "Clerk, United States District Court," and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint because the complaint is legally frivolous or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or both.

An Order of Dismissal will accompany this Memorandum and Order.

So Ordered this 9th day of February, 2012.



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E. RICHARD WEBBER  
SENIOR UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE